



COBB COUNTY EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT AGENCY

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Cobb Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) Procedures

Community-based preparedness allows us to prepare for, and respond to, anticipated disruptions and potential hazards following a disaster. Studies show that efforts to plan for disaster response are more successful if they are organized and interwoven with the social and political fabric of the community. The effectiveness of a disaster response requires comprehensive planning and coordination and the cooperation of all who will be involved. As such, CERT students/members should be guided by an understanding of the high expectations that citizens have regarding moral character, cooperativeness, and the performance of duties. Of necessity, CERT members will be required to exercise good judgment in determining their course of conduct.

These procedures have been developed to provide written guidance to ensure CERT students/members are aware of expectations, requirements, and essential program procedures. The procedures may be changed periodically, and such modifications are effective immediately upon issuance. The procedures may also be changed by verbal directives of the Director or Deputy Director of the Cobb County Emergency Management Agency.

- A) Background Check Requirement - All CERT members and students applying for enrollment in the CERT program must sign an Annual Criminal History Waiver form and provide a copy of a government issued photo identification card, or valid driver's license, to permit the Department of Public Safety to complete individual criminal history checks. All new students will consent to a criminal history check which will be completed prior to the conclusion of training. CERT members may be required to submit to future criminal history checks at the discretion of the EMA Deputy Director or Director. Any applicant with a felony conviction will be ineligible for CERT training. Any current CERT graduate with a felony plea or conviction will be placed on revoked status and will not be eligible for future training or team eligible status. The criminal history background checks will be conducted by members of Cobb County Department of Public Safety (DPS) or Police Department. Students will incur no fees for the criminal history checks.
- B) CERT Training Requirements – To remain active, CERT graduates must attend a minimum of one pre-approved training course annually. CERT members may elect to attend one or more training events through Cobb EMA and/or any outside agency pre-approved course. Cobb EMA will maintain a list of approved training courses. If electing enrollment in classes other than those provided by Cobb EMA, members must submit an application and required documents to EMA and will be personally responsible for any associated training costs. The CERT team member will be responsible to submit course completion documentation to Cobb EMA.

- C) Chain of Command Procedure – CERT members are to respect the authority of Cobb County Emergency Management Agency and shall comply with all directives of the Director, Deputy Director, or his/her designee(s), who are the only persons authorized to conduct activities, issue assignments, and/or to prescribe policies and procedures. Committee chairpersons and district leaders have limited authority, subject to the mission of the committee and/or district, and subject to the Deputy Director's authority. A CERT member who has an issue of concern should pass the matter up the lines of authority until a resolution is reached. Such issues must be succinctly stated and must be pertinent to the CERT program. Accordingly, a CERT member ordinarily should first address a relevant issue with the appropriate Committee Chairperson or District Leader. Absent resolution, the member may then proceed to address the issue with the Deputy Director. The final authority for resolution of issues is the EMA Director. (This procedure is known as the chain-of-command policy and procedure).
- D) Conduct of CERT Members – CERT members shall conduct themselves properly and professionally so as to ensure the efficiency, integrity, and reputation of the CERT program.

No member, regardless of category of membership, may carry a weapon while performing duties as part of the CERT program.

CERT members may not identify themselves as CERT members to request information from, or to provide guidance to, other Cobb County agencies or departments, or private entities, or other citizen corps volunteer organizations, unless authorized to do so by the Deputy Director.

Any public representation of CERT, or display of CERT official clothing or equipment, may be undertaken only upon prior written approval from the EMA Director, Deputy Director, or his/her designee. Where time is of the essence, verbal approval from the Director or Deputy Director shall be sufficient.

CERT students and members shall not represent themselves as employees of Cobb County Government. This provision notwithstanding, if officially requested to carry out a directive or procedure at the behest of Cobb County EMA, CERT individuals may execute the directive or procedure and communicate that the action is consistent with direction received from Cobb County EMA.

CERT students and members shall avoid all conflicts of interest. In this regard, CERT members may not represent themselves as members of CERT, or as being affiliated with Cobb County EMA, for the purpose of influencing a decision of another individual for personal, political, or other gain.

CERT members shall be required to report to the Deputy Director any arrest, plea, or conviction received after becoming members.

CERT members shall not consume alcohol or illegal drugs within a twenty-four (24) hour period prior to participation in any CERT activity. Inappropriate and/or unauthorized conduct will subject a member to being placed on inactive or probationary status. Repeated or serious conduct violations will result in the revocation of an individual's CERT status.

E) Status of CERT members – CERT members may be classified into four categories of Active Status, Inactive Status, Probationary Status, and Revoked Status as described below:

1. Active Status – A CERT member will remain on active status so long as the member maintains annual training requirements and has not engaged in conduct that would result in a revocation of the individual's right to participate in the CERT program.
2. Inactive Status – A CERT member will be placed on inactive status for his/her failure to complete annual training. Members will receive written notification of an Inactive Status by mail during January or February of each year. Such members shall not be permitted to engage in CERT activities until their training requirements are satisfied.

A CERT member may be placed on inactive status upon a determination that the member has engaged in improper, inappropriate, disruptive, or unbecoming conduct. Members placed on Inactive Status will receive written notification by mail.

A CERT member may also be placed on inactive status upon becoming ineligible for other reasons, including but not limited to: notification of relocation, death, illness, and notification of withdrawal. If a member has been placed on inactive status, but is otherwise in good standing, he/she may re-apply for active status at any time.

NOTE: If a member who has been placed on inactive status for failure to complete training remains inactive for a period of one (1) year, such individual will be removed from the CERT registry, but may apply for reinstatement upon completion of training.

3. Probationary Status – A CERT member may be placed on probationary status upon a determination that the member has engaged in improper, inappropriate, disruptive, or unbecoming conduct. If placed on probation, the CERT member should be provided specific conditions with which he/she must comply while the probationary status is in effect. The Citizen Corps and Deputy Director will review the conduct whereby the member may present his/her view, and then a decision will be made and provided to the member in writing within 10 days.

4. Revoked Status – A CERT member's status may be revoked for serious and/or repeated misconduct or for a felony conviction.

- a. Revocation of CERT Status for Misconduct – A CERT member shall be disqualified and his/her status as a member shall be revoked if the individual engages in serious and/or repeated misconduct. Such disqualification and revocation shall be effective immediately upon the decision of the Deputy Director, and provided in writing by mail to the member. However, a member may request an appeal of such disqualification within twenty (20) days of such revocation to the Cobb County EMA Director. Prior to and during the pendency of an appeal, the member shall have no rights or privileges associated with CERT.

Upon receipt of an appeal, the EMA Director shall notify the applicant of a scheduled appearance before a review panel comprised of Citizen Corps Council members. At such meeting, presentations shall be made by the EMA Deputy Director and the member. Within seven (7) days after the review panel has heard the appeal, the panel will recommend that the revocation be upheld or will recommend that the member be reinstated. Following receipt of the review panel's recommendation, the EMA Director will render a final decision within thirty (30) days. The appealing CERT member will receive written notification of the final outcome.

- b. Revocation of CERT Status for Felony – A CERT member shall be disqualified and his/her status as a member shall be revoked if the individual pleads to, or is convicted of, a felony. The member will be notified in writing by mail, and such disqualification and revocation shall be effective immediately. However, a member may request an appeal of disqualification within twenty (20) days of such revocation to the Cobb County EMA Director or Deputy Director. Prior to and during the pendency of an appeal, the member shall have no rights or privileges associated with CERT.

Upon receipt of an appeal, the EMA Director or Deputy Director shall notify the applicant of a scheduled appearance before a review panel comprised of Citizen Corps Council members and the Cobb DPS Internal Affairs Commander or his/her designee(s). Within seven (7) days after the review panel has heard the appeal, the panel will recommend that the revocation be upheld or will recommend to the DPS Director that the member be reinstated. The review panel shall be authorized to review all circumstances to determine whether disqualification or reinstatement is appropriate. Following receipt of the recommendation of the review panel, the DPS Director and County Manager will render a final decision within thirty (30) days. The appealing CERT member will receive written notification of the final outcome.

Simultaneously with the filing of an appeal, a member whose status is revoked for a felony may speak directly with the Internal Affairs Commander or his/her designee to present any explanation regarding the accuracy or inaccuracy of the individual's criminal record. If such review by Internal Affairs results in the conclusion that the individual's criminal record is erroneous, Internal Affairs shall report that conclusion to the Deputy Director, who shall be authorized to reinstate the member without need for a hearing before the review panel.

I acknowledge the receipt of the preceding policies and procedures. Signed and acknowledged on this the _____ day of _____, 20____.

Print Name _____ Signature _____